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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire was sent to 161 international graduate students studying agricultural education/extension in the United States to identify implications for the International Training Program at the American Farm School near Thessaloniki, Greece, and to assess the students' degree of interest in attending the Farm School's Training Program. Eighty-six usable responses yielded data on age and sex of respondents, sources of financial assistance, professional positions, country of origin, degrees held, satisfaction with programs, courses taken, perceptions of program goals, and desired changes in curriculum. While students were generally pleased with their formal graduate programs, some voids existed, and 93% of the respondents showed interest in attending the International Training Program. It was concluded that these students could be prime participants in the program, and potential students for a summer program. Recommendations included: a good informational program should be instituted to provide students with timely course/enrollment information for the Farm School; efforts should be made to encourage countries to sponsor their students in the school's summer short course; and the American Farm School and United States international graduate programs should alter their curricula to address more practical concerns, such as rural development activities. (JMM)

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Graduate Programs of International Students Studying Agricultural Education in the United States with Implications to the International Training Program at the American Farm School in Greece

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The American Farm School, located just outside the city of Thessaloniki, Greece, is a unique private non-profit institution with over 80 years of service to Greek agriculture. Over the years, nearly 2,000 students have graduated from the Farm School and have taken leadership roles in various positions throughout Greece. The Farm School has been a source and stimulation of innovations in agricultural production with examples of being the first to: bring a Jersey cow and Rhode Island red hen to Greece; introduce pasteurized milk; and practice artificial insemination in swine.

The Farm School's rich history of success in Greece has spread throughout the world. Over 10,000 people visit the school annually to learn more of their academic programs, farm operations, and management techniques. The reputation of practicing quality education over a period of time has led to numerous requests for assistance from individuals and countries who would like to develop and/or explore similar educational programs in their home countries.

Realizing that the Farm School has a mission and responsibility for helping others grow, they began to explore seriously in late 1985 the possibility of offering a short course or program for international students who would like to become more familiar with the operations of the Farm School. In February 1986, the Farm School's dedication to an International Training Program began to solidify into definite lines of directions which would eventually focus upon developing and conducting a quality program for the preparation of individuals who would have an interest in transferring this type of educational program to their home countries.

As part of this planning scheme, an intense educational program was conducted for a group of students from Reading University, England, with the purpose to field test some ideas, topics, and directions that the International Training Program might take. Another concurrent thrust was to explore with certain countries in Africa their interest in sending groups of 10-20 individuals to the Farm School on a contract basis to attend such a Training Program. A third planning technique was to survey international graduate students

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studying agricultural education/extension in the United States to assess their interest in participating in such an educational program under study by the American Farm School.

Purpose of Study

The overall objective of this study was to review the graduate programs of international students studying agricultural education in the United States for the purpose of identifying implications for the International Training Program at the American Farm School. A secondary purpose of this study was to assess the degree of interest that international students would express in attending this Training Program offered by the Farm School.

Procedures and Methodology

An instrument was developed that addressed the purposes of the study and also collected additional information. The questionnaire was pilot tested with five international students in April, 1986 who were in attendance at the Annual Conference of the Association for International Agricultural Education. Necessary revisions were than made by the senior author and the Farm School.

Department chairpersons of agricultural education at universities in the United States then identified 161 international graduate students who were studying agricultural education/extension. A follow-up of non-respondents provided the authors with 86 usable returns. Of the remaining 75, twenty-one were no longer at their universities and 54 were not returned. The return rate on the 140 students still in the United States was 61 percent. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results

Of the 86 international students indicating their sex, 81 percent were male and the average age was 34 years. Sources of financial assistance for educationally related expenses came from the United States for 42 of the respondents while 38 were receiving grants from their home countries. Several individuals reported that they received financial support from more than one source.

The professional positions held by respondents were generally in education or extension, with 62 and 41 respectively, indicating these categories.

Africa was by far the region where most of the graduate students came from (41) with 16 from Nigeria alone. Asia had 35 students with 8 from Indonesia, while 11 came from Latin America, and 2 came from Europe.

All international students possessed at least one degree. The bachelor's degree was held by 74 students, the master's degree by 53 students, and those with doctorates totaled 4.

A total of 72 (84 percent) of the graduate students appeared to be pleased with their graduate programs in the United States. The most common professional education courses taken and the number of student taking them were: extension (66); program planning (58); adult education (56); evaluation (48); teaching methodology (45);

administration/supervision of education programs (41); and instructional/audio visual aids (40). The courses taken by the least number of graduate students were: financing education (8); special needs population (6); counseling students (6) (Table 1).

The most common technical agricultural courses and the number of students taking them were: agricultural economics (32); agronomy (27); and animal science (20). Courses taken by the fewest graduate students were: biochemistry (5); forestry (5) and wildlife (3) (Table 2).

Courses taken by students not falling in the professional or technical areas were categorized as supporting courses (Table 3). The more popular courses and the number of students taking them were: microcomputers (31); written communication (31); and rural sociology (29). Supporting courses not taken by many students were: recreation (3) and world geography (3).

Perceptions of international students that the graduate programs in the United States were preparing them to carry out programs of agricultural education in their home countries were quite high (Table 4). On a 1-4 scale where 1=strongly agree and 4=strongly disagree, all means except one were lower than 2.5, or in other words, the students agreed with all the statements except one. The lowest mean of 1.67 was obtained for the statement that their graduate programs were preparing them to plan agricultural education programs while the highest mean of 2.74 was for the statement on working with special needs students. A rating of 2.7 indicates that international students disagreed that they were being prepared to work with special needs students.

Even though the students were pleased with their graduate programs, they identified numerous courses or experiences they would have liked to have included in their graduate programs. In credit courses, students would have liked more agricultural courses in agronomy, agricultural engineering, and agricultural economics. In education, more credit courses were desired in extension and program evaluation, while rural sociology and computer science were their choices in the supporting courses.

Hands on, practical experiences desired by students focused upon production procedures and management techniques in the area of agriculture. Additional educational experiences seen as desirable would be those that centered around the responsibilities of extension agents and rural development project leaders (Table 5).

Perhaps the most important question to the American Farm School was the respondent interest in attending an International Training Program under development by the school. Of the 86 respondents, 93 percent indicated interest in attending such a program.

Conclusions

Based upon the findings of this study, the following conclusions were made:

1. The international students studying in the United States

would be a prime group to participate in the International Training Program under development at the Farm School. They are at an age where many years of future leadership can be given to educational programs in their home countries and they have a rich background of professional education and extension experiences upon which to build.

2. While all international students in the United States could be potential participants in a summer program, those from Africa and Asia represented the larger group. This agrees with a study conducted by Thummel and Welton in 1981. Due to the location of Greece and travel to and from the United States and their home countries, these countries and individuals may have a greater opportunity to participate in this program.
3. This group of international students represents potential, supplemental enrollees in a summer program, but it would be unwise to depend on participation from this group to make the International Training Program an efficient and effective educational program. Graduate program schedules, dissertation research activities, travel restrictions, and obligations to commitments in the United States will limit participation in a summer program at the Farm School.
4. International students are fairly well pleased with their formal graduate programs. However, some voids do exist. It is evident that students are not being exposed to methods on how to: work with special needs students; counsel students; or finance educational programs. Another void with implication to types of educational programs like the Farm School is in the area of recreation and environmental protection.
5. Informal hands-on educational experiences lacking by international graduate students focused upon production practices, agricultural management techniques, extension agent duties, and rural development activities.
6. International graduate students studying in the United States are interested in participating in an International Training Program such as the one under development at the American Farm School.

Recommendations

Based upon the findings and conclusion of this study, the following are offered as recommendations.

1. That if the graduate students in the United States are to be encouraged to enroll in a summer course of the Farm School, a well-planned and executed informational program be prepared to inform them of the short course and details on how to enroll well in advance of the course offering.
2. That special efforts be made to work with countries in Asia and Africa to sponsor their graduate students' participation in the summer short course as part of their educational program while on their way to or

from the United States.

3. That the Farm School seriously consider as part of the summer short course the following topics: working with the special needs students; counseling students, financing educational programs; management techniques as applied in agricultural settings; up-to-date production practices; recreational programs; and rural development activities.
4. That graduate programs of international students in the United States include more courses and activities in: practical hands-on experiences in operating educational programs; up-to-date farm production practices; farm management techniques; cooperative extension internships; rural development activities; working with special needs clientele, counseling students and environmental protection.

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Table 1

Professional Education Courses Taken by International Graduate Students

Course	Number Taking Course
Extension Education	66
Program Planning	58
Adult Education	56
Evaluation	48
Teaching Methodology	45
Administration/Supervision of Education Programs	41
Instructional/Audio Visual Aids	40
Curriculum Content Development	37
Learning Theories	35
Instructional Materials Development	34
Philosophy of Education	33
Youth/Student Organizations	28
Community Development	28
International Studies Education	19
Student Home/Farm Projects	12
Facilities and Equipment Planning	11
Financing Education	8
Counseling Students	6
Special Needs Populations	6

Table 2
Technical Agricultural Courses Taken by International Graduate Students

Course	Number Taking Course
Agricultural Economics	32
Agronomy	27
Animal Science	20
Agricultural Mechanics/Engineering	13
Horticulture	12
Poultry Science	12
Food Science and Technology	11
Entomology	9
Plant Pathology	9
Dairy Science	8
Biochemistry	6
Forestry	5
Wildlife	3

Table 3

Supporting Courses Taken by International Graduate Students

Course	Number Taking Course
Microcomputers	31
Communication (written)	31
Rural Sociology	29
Statistics	26
Psychology	26
Communication (oral)	24
Sociology	21
Human Relations	18
Public Relations	18
Nutrition	13
Business Management	8
Health Education	8
Environmental Protection	7
World Geography	3
Recreation	3

Table 4

Perceptions of International Graduate Students that Studies in the United States are Preparing Them to Carry Out Programs of Agricultural Education in Their Home Countries

Responsibility	SA[1] (1)	A (2)	D (3)	SD (4)	NR	MEAN
1. administer/supervise a local program of agricultural education	40	35	5	6	-	1.73
2. give leadership for staff development activities	42	33	5	6	-	1.71
3. plan agricultural education programs	46	29	4	7	-	1.67
4. develop curricular content for agricultural programs	24	42	10	8	2	2.02
5. advise and conduct youth organizations activities	26	28	22	8	2	2.14
6. use various teaching methods	40	31	7	7	1	1.78
7. plan and work with adult groups	37	31	11	7	-	1.86
8. develop student individual projects for hands-on experiences	19	35	22	8	2	2.23
9. use audio visuals in teaching situations	35	24	16	8	3	1.96
10. work with special needs students	10	22	32	20	2	2.74
11. evaluate programs of agricultural education	36	35	8	6	1	1.81
12. identify appropriate facilities and equipment needed for an agricultural program	33	32	16	4	1	1.89

(Table Continues)

Responsibility	SA (1)	A (2)	D (3)	SD (4)	NR	MEAN
13. identify ways to finance program	11	34	34	6	1	2.41
14. counsel students enrolled in agricultural education	17	36	22	10	1	2.29
15. understand community development procedures	23	45	12	5	1	1.99
16. work with community leaders in developmental activities	32	35	11	7	1	1.92

1
Scale: 1 = strongly agree (SA)
2 = agree (A)
3 = disagree (D)
4 = strongly disagree (SD)
NR = no response

Table 5

Practical, Hands-on Experiences International Graduate Students Would Have Liked to Have Included in Their Graduate Programs

Technical Agricultural Experience	Number Responding
Farm Practices	12
Management	8
Using Computers in Agriculture	6
Crop Production	5
Repairing Tractors	4
Agricultural Equipment	3
Dairy Industry	2
Livestock	2
Other	7

Educational Experience	Number Responding
County Agent Internship	21
Rural Development Projects	8
Teaching in Vocational Technical Education	5
FFA/4-H	5
Adult Education Programs	4
Administration/Supervision of Educational Programs	3
Supervision of Student Teachers	2
Organizing Workshops	2
Attending State or National Conference on Agricultural Education or Agricultural Extension	2
Conducting Empirical Research	2